

comment on letters like this. We are receiving thousands and thousands of letters from constituents. I view these letters to be very, very important. They provide for me the encouragement and the direction from my constituency to help me be a more forceful leader on the House floor and to speak more clearly about the interests of my constituency that I propose to represent here and believe that I do.

I think it is a healthy thing for all Americans right now, if they have ever considered writing a letter, showing up at a town meeting, calling a Member of Congress, submitting a letter to the President, this is the time to do it. We have not had a crisis of this proportion in a long, long time. This is not a time for inaction among the constituents.

I would like to hear in the minute or two that we have left from the others their opinions on the value of constituent input.

Mr. OSE. I thank the gentleman from Colorado.

I, too, had town hall meetings this weekend. In fact, I had one last night in a community called Carmichael. It was probably a 95 percent opposition to what we are doing in Yugoslavia.

The characterization that you lent to your constituent I think is extremely accurate. The American people have a very clear understanding of what America is all about. America is not about being undefined, ill-equipped and undirected towards an objective. America is about figuring out what we want to do and then doing it.

We are not in that situation today by virtue of a lack of leadership from the administration. The voters of this country understand how America works, and they are looking to us to conduct our affairs in accordance with that clear thing. That is, identify the objective and then go do it.

I thank the gentleman for including me in this hour tonight. I am pleased to reinforce the sentiments that he has seen in his constituents.

Mr. SCHAFFER. Let me just ask one more question. How important are letters like this in your office and among your constituency? What happens to these letters when they get to your desk?

Mr. OSE. The gentleman from Colorado brings up an interesting point. We probably receive upwards of 5 to 700 letters a week, some by e-mail, some by Postal Service. We respond to every one. The subject matter is all over the map, depending on what happens.

We find that an absolutely credible means of identifying things that are affecting our constituents directly. It is an immediate thing. It is like squeezing a water balloon in my district. If something happens, bam, I have got a letter. Something happens, bam, I have got an e-mail.

I want to encourage everybody, as we have for 220 years, to stay in touch with their representatives and continue to write. In fact, now would be a very timely period to write because of

our difficulty with the administration in Yugoslavia.

I thank the gentleman for that point.

Mr. HILL of Montana. As the gentleman knows, certainly there are well-informed Members of Congress on most every issue, but I find that there is greater wisdom in my district than there is wisdom here in this Capitol. Very often, my constituents write to me and give me special insights into how an issue or how a matter would impact them.

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Certainly people have, I think, a personal view of the situation in Kosovo. They have sons and daughters who may be called upon to fight, or they have neighbors who will or friends.

But also I think that there is an issue here about who we are as a country and how we are governed as a country. I do not think that the American people are comfortable with the idea that one person can make a decision to put this Nation at war, put our men and women at risk and the treasury of the country at risk without the consent of the American people and their Congress.

The letters that I have received are overwhelming in opposition to this war, but I have found some of them very insightful. Even had one member of the Armed Services send me a letter resigning his commission as a consequence of this.

But the fact is, is that I find that extraordinarily valuable. Like my colleagues, I think we received 40,000 or more letters a year. We respond to them all. It is a challenge for us to get that job done. But the value to me, of course, is hearing from my constituents, having their input, having their ideas and their views. I always learn from them, and I appreciate it very much.

Mr. SCHAFFER. We are all part of the Republican majority here in Congress, and many people wonder how it is that we have two divergent viewpoints in Washington about how to lead the country, that which is represented by the President and that which is represented by the majority here in Congress, and I think tonight's special order by Republicans, Members of the majority party, is one indication of how it is we come to differences of opinions on such important matters of public policy.

I am proud to be a part of the party that takes its direction from the people of the country, that reads the mail, that listens to the phone calls, that responds to the opinions that come to us at town meetings, and, as we all know, there are legions of special interests whose lobbyists parade through the halls of Congress trying to leverage every bit of influence that they can on politicians, but it is the voice of real people, ordinary Americans who will commit to 10, 15, 20 minutes to sit down and put their thoughts in writing and communicate to their Congressman that, if they continue to do so in

great numbers and reach out and realize the tremendous difference that a Republican majority has made in this Congress for the American people, it is not only possible but, I believe, imminent that the voice of the people will rise up over and above those of the special interests that have so much influence at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

So I am very, very proud to be associated with the colleagues that have joined me here tonight, Mr. Speaker, in this special order. I am grateful for the indulgence in yielding to us an hour for the majority party, and for those members of the majority party we try to reserve this hour every Wednesday night, and we will be back next week.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KUYKENDALL). The Chair is concerned about a couple of remarks made by previous speakers earlier this evening and will remind all Members that the rules of decorum in the debate prohibit the attribution of unworthy motives to the President. That standard applies both to debate and to extraneous material read into the RECORD.

A NECESSARY EVIL?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from New York (Mr. OWENS) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I want to follow up on the previous set of speakers and talk about the Kosovo burden, the Kosovo burden and decision-making in the 106th Congress, how it impacts and will impact on everything we do in the rest of this Congress.

I might begin by stating that I previously stated already that Kosovo is, in my opinion, a campaign of compassion. I think that it was important to confront Slobodan Milosevic. He gave the civilized nations no choice. I think this war is a necessary evil.

All wars are evil, necessary evils, but the word "necessary" becomes very important. "Necessary" is a vital word that many of my constituents are questioning, and like the gentlemen before me, I have gotten many letters and many comments, and I welcome those comments and those letters, both those that agree with me and those that do not agree with me. It is important that we discuss and have a dialogue about whether or not this war, like all other wars, it is an evil, but is it a necessary evil?

I think it very important to note that I, too, have had a series of town meetings, and in three or four town meetings, the first three, unanimous agreement when I asked do they support the present actions in Kosovo. Ninety-five percent of the people in the audience raised their hands. One meeting I had 200 people. I was shocked to